

VZCZCXRO2099  
OO RUEHIK  
DE RUEHTA #2139/01 3440338  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
O 100338Z DEC 09  
FM AMEMBASSY ASTANA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6977  
INFO RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE 2236  
RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE  
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 1606  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1599  
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 2300  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 1234  
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEFAAA/DIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC 1794  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC 1644  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RHMFISS/CDR USTRANSCOM SCOTT AFB IL  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2615  
RUEHAST/AMCONSUL ALMATY 2084

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ASTANA 002139

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN, OES/PCI, IO, EUR/RPM

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [SENV](#) [OSCE](#) [UN](#) [KZ](#)

SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: ASTANA TO HOST SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
MINISTERIAL IN 2010

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11. SUMMARY: The Kazakhstani Ministry of Environment hosted the Advisory Council Meeting on Preparation for the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development (MCED) to be held in Astana in 2010. The MCED is held every five years, and the next Ministerial theme will be to adopt "green growth" as the region's key strategy. This MCED will be the first one held in Central Asia. The key issues will be bridging Asia and Europe, trans-boundary water issues, climate change adaptation, resilient development, and a green environment as central to economic development. One idea will be to regard Kazakhstan's status in Central Asia as a "bridge" between Central Asia and Europe. The Italian Ambassador (representing the European Union) said water management is a vital challenge, and Europe will attempt to improve water resource management and encourage regional cooperation. The business sector said "business as usual" is no longer possible. The government must provide adequate incentives to the business community to increase its "greenness." Such a policy could reduce poverty by providing green jobs, reduce overall environmental degradation, help businesses adapt to the effects of climate change, and ensure sufficient resources for long-term economic growth. END SUMMARY.

ASTANA TO HOST SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT MINISTERIAL IN 2010

12. The Kazakhstani Ministry of Environment, along with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), and the Central Asian Regional Environmental Center (CAREC) hosted on November 24 the Advisory Council Meeting on Preparation for the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development (MCED) to be held in Astana in 2010. The Minister of Environment's Executive Secretary, Anatoliy Dernovoy, introduced the conference, saying that the 2010 OSCE Chairmanship is especially important for Kazakhstan and for the environmental portion of Kazakhstan's responsibilities as the Chair. Kazakhstan hopes to use its geopolitical position in Central Asia to further the resolution of several problems, including transportation, tourism, and the environment.

13. Held every five years, beginning in 1985, the MCED allows all 62

member countries to review the status of their environmental development and consider joint cooperation in priority areas. In 1985, the MCED focused on human development; in 1990, the ministerial prepared input for the 1992 Rio Earth Summit; 1995 focused on a sustainable development model for Asia and the Pacific; and the theme for 2000 was "moving from capacity to concrete actions." This next Ministerial theme will be to adopt "green growth" as the region's key strategy, ensuring environmental sustainability while maintaining economic growth.

¶4. According to United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) Masakazu Ichimura, the big difference between Asia and Europe is poverty. Therefore, Asian countries must find the proper balance between the environment and economic development. Asia faces the challenges of poverty, access to resources, and financial help. Astana's MCED will focus on the environment and development, and the fundamental needs for furthering green growth along the direction set in the previous MCED.

¶5. As the first Ministerial Conference to be held in Central Asia, it is a tribute to Kazakhstan's leading role in the region. The key issues for the Ministerial will be to bridge Asia and Europe and address trans-boundary water issues, climate change adaptation, resilient development, and the centrality of a green environment to economic development. The Ministerial format will consist of two to three days of meetings for senior officials, one or two days for ministers, and side events. The tentative dates are September 27-October 3, 2010, in Astana.

¶6. According to Ichimura, the final Ministerial statement will include a 2010 regional report on sustainable development, a review of the implementation of sustainable development plans and programs

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in the Asia Pacific region, a thematic paper (to be determined), a ministerial declaration, an action plan for subsequent years, and a set of key initiatives in all priority areas.

KAZAKHSTAN IS THE "BRIDGE" BETWEEN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

¶7. Central Asian Regional Environmental Center (CAREC) Director Talaybek Makaev said the major priorities for the upcoming MCED include a coordinated management plan for water resources in Central Asia, adaptation to climate change, and sustainable energy development. He added that one important theme is to regard Kazakhstan in Central Asia as the "bridge" between Central Asia and Europe. Civil society, businesses, governments, diplomatic missions, international and regional organizations, the scientific community, and the press will participate in MCED. CAREC aims to clarify the notion of a "green economy" and disseminate that idea to the general population.

¶8. According to Makaev, CAREC will form an expert group to prepare for Astana 2010, coordinate the preparation of ministerial documents, set up a website as an "information platform," have press conferences, place ads in the media, and hold forums to exchange ideas. It will also carry out regional projects, such as the insulation of older buildings or reduction of pollution to demonstrate the idea of a green economy.

¶9. Italian Ambassador Bruno Pasquino, representing the European Union, said that coordinated development between regions is the key to good governance. The Asia-Pacific region and Europe need to join forces to combat climate change, in part because Central Asia is particularly vulnerable to its consequences. Europe can assist in policy-making, implementation, development of clean energy and emission-control technology, energy efficiency, and renewable energy. Water management is a vital challenge, he asserted, and Europe will attempt to improve water-management and encourage regional cooperation. He mentioned that Europe will establish a European-Central Asian working group on climate change and environmental governance.

¶10. OSCE Economy and Environment Director Terry Holland also stressed the importance of environmental security, noting the

trans-boundary character and global impact of environmental problems. Resolution of water-resource management in Central Asia is vital to ensure regional stability. He added that Kazakhstan today serves as a bridge between Europe and Central Asia, because Kazakhstan will assume the 2010 OSCE chairmanship. This position will give Kazakhstan a great opportunity to achieve many important goals.

#### BUSINESS SECTOR SUPPORTS THE IDEA OF "GREEN BUSINESS"

¶11. ESCAP Department of Environmental Policy and Development Aneta Nikolova said "business as usual" is simply no longer possible. Economic development faces limitations, including climate change, environmental pollution, and a shortage of resources. Several good ideas and initiatives on sustainable development exist, she asserted, but methods to support them with targeted policies remain unclear. Because the current ecological footprint of modern economies exceeds the earth's bio-capacity, she stated that "business as usual" is just a bad idea.

¶12. According to Nikolova, a green economy is the wave of the future. The government and public sector must support the goals of renewable energy by providing adequate incentives to the business community. Green business can include not only sustainable development, but also eco-tourism and the "greening" of the private sector (e.g., more energy efficient buildings, less energy consumption, less pollution, etc.). The overall objective is to attain "eco-efficiency" along with profitability. The government should support "green business," because they will reduce poverty by providing green jobs, decrease overall environmental degradation, help businesses adapt to the effects of climate change, and ensure

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sufficient resources for long-term economic growth. She said government subsidies to make buildings more green (e.g., better insulated, less energy intense, etc.), eco-labeling of products, and micro loans to small- and medium-sized enterprises can also help promote green business. She proposed a Green Business Exhibition as a side event at the Astana 2010 MCED.

¶13. COMMENT: Astana's hosting of the next MCED in 2010 is important, not only because it is the first time for Central Asia, but also because it highlights UN, OSCE, and European thoughts on Kazakhstan's rising status and leading role in Central Asia. Set to coincide with Kazakhstan's 2010 Chairmanship of the OSCE, it burnishes Kazakhstan's image as a country that actively promotes sustainable development. Although Kazakhstan's political will in this area is clear, its Soviet legacy often hampers its efforts. A member of the MCED, the United States will most likely send a delegation to Astana. END COMMENT.

HOAGLAND